CRITICAL COASTAL AREAS
WATERSHED ACTION PLAN OUTLINE

Note: *this is a general overview to provide guidance in structuring a watershed management plan – it should be customized in each watershed to fit the particular scope of work and deliverables. (Plan outline derived from Morro Bay CCMP and State Coastal Conservancy guidance)*

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Primary Audience: Funders, potential partners, local government officials and planners, regulatory agencies, legislators, community.

Description: Brief (> 10 pages), needs to be a public relations tool that captures attention and generates interest in participating in next steps. Easy to read, non-technical, sums up major points concisely, clarifies what is needed to move forward and why it's important. Maps, graphics, and tables should be limited in number but powerful, driving home the major points rather than documenting data collected (that comes later).

Contents:

- **Statement of Problem**- why plan needed and any constraints limiting work
- **Goals and Objectives of Plan** - plan should be living proof these were accomplished
- **Planning Process, Participants, and Methodology** – brief, high level, non-technical
- **Bulleted list of major findings**
- **Implemenation goals and objectives** - achievable and measurable outcomes if recommendations are carried out – what would a funder get for their money or a politician for their participation? Should tie in directly to the monitoring program to be able to track success and demonstrate benefits. Can also include socio-economic outcomes.
- **Summary/matrix of recommendations**
- **Next steps** - who needs to take what action, list of highest priority projects and management changes, funding and permits needed, other obstacles to overcome, etc.

Examples of graphics include:

- Map of watershed with major landmarks and land uses

- Map of major water quality problem areas, major land use distinctions and other problem areas with overlay of coastal resources (helps funders decide what would be gained by doing a project and which order to do them in). Recommended projects should be identified, keyed to the matrix.

- Graphs or tables that dramatically document trends in water quality, aquatic habitat, coastal impacts and indicators etc. – these should be simple and non-technical.

B. BODY OF PLAN

Primary Audience: Anyone with a vested interest in the watershed, includes both technical and lay readers.

Description: Moderate length (~ 20-30 pages). While the body of the plan goes into more detail than the executive summary in order to provide background and needed foundations for conclusions, it should still be concise, tightly scripted, and to the point. Technical terms, methods, and analyses should be explained for the lay reader. Existing conditions should be described and findings should be clearly substantiated by data and analyses, with a discussion of any limitations of the analyses or data collection. Tables and graphs should be used judiciously to clearly illustrate a point, with the bulk of the data available in the technical appendices. Findings should be synthesized across disciplines and assessment areas to ensure that they dovetail and address limiting factors; any incompatible solutions should be discussed to allow for decision-making. Recommendations should follow from the findings, with a discussion of what could happen if no action is taken.

Chapters:

1. **Introduction** – provides the context of the watershed and the planning process
   - Purpose of plan – need/issues, plan goal and objectives
   - Background – watershed processes and historical water quality issues
   - Project methodology and participants
   - Other related studies/projects (as pertinent)

2. **Understanding the Area –**

   - **Historical and Existing Conditions**
     - concise snapshot of past land uses and current setting.
     - May be organized by land use (Urban, Agriculture, forestry) by important resources (wetlands, fisheries, beach closures, etc.), by water quality issue and/or by subwatershed.

   - **Findings and Limiting Factors** – compiled bulleted list of all assessment findings,
     - synthesized discussion of potential additional Management Measures,
     - opportunities and constraints,
     - data gaps,
     - and anticipated trends if no action is taken.

- **Recommendations** – Narrative discussion of both management and project recommendations and areas for further study.

    - Provide list of priority problems to be addressed through Management Measures.

3. **Agencies, Programs and coordination opportunities**
    - Inventory of active agencies and their roles
    - Inventory of active programs
    - Gaps analysis between priority problems and existing programs

Examples of graphics include:

- Maps detailing historical and/or existing conditions in each assessment area.
- Photographs of key problem areas, especially at proposed monitoring locations.
- Aerial and historical photos if available.
- Map(s) indicating recommended project sites (keyed to narrative and matrix and coded by priority).
- Tables and graphs that support findings - should be understandable to the lay reader (bulk of data in technical appendices).

C. IMPLEMENTATION / ACTION PLAN

Primary Audience: Watershed groups and others driving the implementation of the plan.

Description: The action plan is a planning tool, the roadmap to guide next steps, a working document that should be well-thumbed, dog-eared, and modified as necessary to reflect changing conditions (flood events, new erosion sources, etc.) and new opportunities (willing landowner, acquisition possibility, etc.). Composed primarily of matrices, it allows the reader to quickly establish priorities and understand the anticipated time frame within which to initiate projects. It provides continuity if there is staff turnover. It also clearly establishes measurable restoration and community goals and objectives and delineates a monitoring program that should track the success of meeting those objectives. This will be a big selling point in future fund-raising efforts.

Contents:

- **Implementation Goals and Objectives** – should be specific, achievable, and measurable.

- **Community Priorities –** should factor in any socio-economic or other concerns that may affect restoration.

- **Matrix of Management and Project Recommendations**, including:

    - Prioritized recommendations (e.g., high, medium, low)
    - Phasing of when to initiate project (e.g., Phase 1: 0-5 years, Phase 2: 5-10 years, Phase 3: 10-15 years)
    - Lead organization / agency
    - Problem being addressed
    - Benefits to be realized
    - Estimated costs
    - Permits needed / other implementation issues

- **Conceptual Plans** of high priority projects (as appropriate) to enough level of detail to inform funding and decision makers.

- **Monitoring Program** -
    - Purpose of monitoring program
    - Monitoring parameters including objectives, baseline data set, success criteria, monitoring methods, locations, schedule, lead, costs
    - Data management and reporting
    - Adaptive management strategies

D. TECHNICAL APPENDICES

Primary Audience: Peer reviewers and others interested in the protocols, data, and analyses of the assessments.

Description: Technical reports detailing the methodologies, collected data, analyses, and results of the assessments. May be organized as individual assessment reports or in other formats as appropriate.